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PLEASE PASS TO S/WCI - AMBASSADOR WILLIAMSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/14/2018
TAGS: PREL PGOV PREF CJAN EUN KJUS KTIA KAWC EI
SUBJECT: IRELAND UNLIKELY TO RESETTLE GUANTANAMO DETAINEES

REF: A. DUBLIN 436 AND PREVIOUS
B. DUBLIN 223

Classified By: Charge Robert J. Faucher; Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

Summary

¶11. (S) EUR/WE Office Director Pamela Spratlen reviewed the status of Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues Clint Williamson's presentation to the Irish government on July 15, 2008, in which Williamson requested the Government of Ireland to accept one or more detainees from Guantanamo who could not be returned to their home country for fear that they would be tortured or killed (Ref A). Rory Montgomery, Political Director, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) indicated that Ireland would be unlikely to accept detainees. Sean Aylward, Secretary General, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (DOJ) flatly declared that Ireland would not resettle detainees. While the Irish will give us the courtesy of reviewing individual resettlement requests, it appears they are not willing to accept any detainees absent the closure of the detainee center at Guantanamo Bay and a comprehensive U.S.-led program to resettle detainees across a broad swath of nations. End summary.

Detainee Acceptance Unlikely: DFA

¶12. (S) Montgomery was circumspect in discussing the issue of detainees, saying that while the decision lay with the Department of Justice and no decision had yet been made, it was "unlikely" that the request to resettle detainees would be accepted by the Irish Government. As to why, Montgomery said that one of the two Palestinian militants Ireland had accepted following the Siege of the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem in 2002 had been troublesome. In addition, he noted that the Irish Government had responded positively in 2007 when asked to take 10 Cuban refugees who had taken shelter at the U.S. military facility at Guantanamo Bay (Ref B). Montgomery went on to suggest that Ireland might be more amenable to accepting detainees if the incoming U.S. administration were to close down the Guantanamo detention facility, request numerous countries to resettle the detainees, and share the burden by resettling some of the detainees in the U.S. itself.

Detainee Acceptance Unacceptable: DOJ

¶13. (S) Taking a tough tone and more strident approach, Aylward, the chief advisor to the Minister of Justice, was much more explicit, stating that he would advise against accepting any detainees. He claimed that Dermot Gallagher, Secretary General of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Montgomery's boss, agreed with him. Aylward's primary reason

for opposing the request was that he feared that "virulently left-wing" elements of the media would "capture" resettled detainees and "parade" them around the country and in the media as "political theater" to showcase their fringe views of American wrongdoing. He said that such action would whip up anti-American sentiment and would be harmful for U.S.-Irish relations.

¶4. (S) Aylward echoed Montgomery in saying that one of the Palestinian militants resettled following the Siege of the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem had been troublesome, noting that considerable police (Garda) resources were tied up in monitoring his activities. (Note: Aylward administratively oversees the police force. End note.) Aylward also noted that the Irish government, as a "gesture of friendship" and "at some expense," had agreed to accept 10 Cuban refugees early in 2008.

¶5. (S) Spratlen pressed Aylward, asking if the Irish door was firmly closed or whether Ireland would consider requests from the U.S. for resettlement on a case-by-case basis. Aylward conceded that Ireland's door would always be open to American requests, but declared that in this case making a request would be "a waste of time" and "a step too far." He concluded by saying that he could "not conceive of a situation" in which he would recommend that Ireland agree to accept a detainee -- "even if they had family in Ireland."

Comment

¶6. (S) Aylward's intransigence came as a surprise, given that previous contact with his staffers had not indicated such depth of opposition. Aylward's opposition is a formidable barrier, especially since it would be prudent to assume that he is reflecting the view of the Minister of Justice. While the Irish will give us the courtesy of reviewing individual resettlement requests, it appears they will refuse to accept any detainees absent a U.S.-led international program to comprehensively resolve the issue of detainees at Guantanamo.

¶7. (U) This message has been cleared by EUR/WE Director Pamela Spratlen.
FAUCHER